Document
to be published in the Journal of CESNUR – (Center for the Study of New Religions)

"Do Not Dissolve the Former Unification Church": A Letter to Keiko Nagaoka, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology.

March 17, 2023

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Abstract: The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology exercised the right to ask questions to the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (formerly called the Unification Church), which under Japanese law is the preliminary step to seek the dissolution of the religious organization. Award-winning journalist Masumi Fukuda, who knew very little about the Unification Church before the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe (1954–2022), decided to investigate, discovered that the reality of the church was different from the slanderous accounts disseminated by the media, and published several articles in the magazine *Monthly Hanada*. On March 17, 2023, Fukuda wrote to the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology summarizing her findings and asking her not to dissolve the Family Federation.

Keywords: Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, Unification Church, Assassination of Shinzo Abe, Spiritual Sales, Sayuri Ogawa, National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales, Anti-Cult Movement in Japan.

I have written articles on issues concerning the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification (called in this text "the former Unification Church" because this was its previous name, and a name under which it is still known) in the December 2022, January 2023, March 2023, and April 2023 issues of the magazine *Monthly Hanada*. The first three articles were enclosed as attachments to the reports and other materials submitted by the former Unification Church in its response to the second and third exercises of the right to ask questions by your Ministry.

In this report, I would like to present my opinion on how misinformation has influenced both the public and the government, and confused the issue of the claims that the former

Unification Church should be dissolved. I will include parts of what I have written in my articles in the text that follows.

My Work

After graduating from the Department of Sociology at Rikkyo University, I worked for a trade magazine company and a publishing company, and am currently a freelance nonfiction writer. I have published six books:

1. *"But I Do Not Wish to be Executed": The Brother of a Victim Appeals for the Abolition of the Death Penalty* (1998, Gendai Shokan)
2. *Stalin: Portrait of His Family* (2002, Bungeishunju)
3. *Fabrication: The True Story of the Fukuoka "Monster Teacher" Case* (2007, Shinchosha, later Shincho-Bunko)
4. *Assassination State Russia: Pursuing Journalists Who Had Been Purged* (2010, Shinchosha, later Shincho-Bunko)
5. *Monster Mother: The Battle of the Teachers Who Were Involved in the "Bullying Suicide Case" at the Maruko Technical High School in Nagano* (2016, Shinchosha, then Shincho-Bunko)
6. *Political Correctness: Beyond "Respect for Diversity" and "Word Hunting"* (2021, Hojosha).

The book *Fabrication: The True Story of the Fukuoka "Monster Teacher" Case* investigates the truth behind the case of a teacher who was suspended after a complaint from a student's parents and was deemed to be the "worst bullying teacher in history" by the media. My book revealed his innocence. It won the Shincho Documentary Award in 2007, became a bestseller with a total of 180,000 copies sold in both the hardback and paperback versions, and was also adapted into a comic.

Monster Mother: The Battle of the Teachers Who Were Involved in the "Bullying Suicide Case" at the Maruko Technical High School in Nagano won the Editors' Choice of Magazine Journalism Award for best work while serialized in the monthly magazine.

My Motivation for Writing on the Issue of the Former Unification Church

As you can see from my previous works, I have never chosen religion as a theme for writing. I had grown up in a family with no religion or religious beliefs, so I had no interest in them. And I was vaguely hostile to new religious movements, a position I shared with most Japanese.

Only once, about 27 years ago, I reported on Soka Gakkai. It was a paperback titled *My Neighbor Soka Gakkai*, published by Takarajimasha, with different authors for each chapter, and I was in charge of one chapter. I do not recall the exact name of the book, as I no longer have a copy of it in my library, but it had as a title something like, "Why Are Soka Gakkai Members so Tolerant of Illness and Misfortune?"

The editor introduced me to the job, and the editorial staff assigned me whom to interview. At that time, I met a number of Soka Gakkai members, and one thing that still impresses me today is that they were very resilient to hardship. I interviewed a woman whose husband had died of a fatal illness only a few years after their marriage, despite her devoted care, and a young man who had suffered from a malignant tumor that kept recurring. Despite their misfortunes, however, they never lost hope and remained cheerful and positive about life. I, as a non-believer, found their cheerfulness surprising.

I realized at that time that, "Those in the secular world often say that those who cling to faith are weak-minded people, and that it is because they are weak-minded that they fall into religion. But people who have faith as the foundation of their hearts and the guiding principle of their lives can in fact be strong." I then thought a little bit more about the significance and value of religion.

I had little interest in or knowledge of the former Unification Church until the assassination of former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe on July 8, 2022, which triggered a resurgence of the campaigns against it. However, I was aware that the former Unification Church had been ostracized by the media because of accusations of "spiritual sales" and its mass weddings and, as many in my generation, I had a vaguely negative image of the church due to that.

However, as the media's one-sided bashing of the former Unification Church became more and more intense, I began to think that this was indeed going too far. I was disturbed by the fact that the church was given little opportunity to explain itself, and even that saying something from a neutral point of view was considered taboo.

At a press conference held by the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales on July 12, 2022, in response to the assassination, one after another the lawyers vehemently condemned the former Unification Church. They went on to say, "As far as the former Unification Church is concerned, Tetsuya Yamagami (Abe's assassin) and his mother are 100% the victims, and the cult is 100% the perpetrator." They described the former Unification Church as a "great evil."

I was also surprised by the comments of Attorney Masaki Kito, who appeared every day on TV talk shows. He said, “The former Unification Church even makes its followers engage in prostitution to raise funds,” “The idea that it is legitimate to steal money is widespread among the former Unification Church followers,” “Parents ask gangs to get their children out of the church. However, the gangs give the money from the parents to the church,” and so on. All of these statements were frankly unbelievable. Furthermore, when Kito said, “Aum Shinrikyo and the Unification Church are the only religious groups in Japan that can be called cults,” I felt that it was unreasonable to equate Aum Shinrikyo, which has killed and injured many ex-followers and ordinary citizens, with the former Unification Church, which has not harmed one single person.

There is another reason why I was uncomfortable with the tendency to assume that the former Unification Church is synonymous of evil. As mentioned above, I published a book in 2021 called *Political Correctness: Beyond “Respect for Diversity” and “Word Hunting.”* To write this book, around the spring of 2021, I interviewed a member of the editorial board of *Sekai Nippo*, who is an expert on the issue of political correctness in the United States.

I knew that *Sekai Nippo* is a daily newspaper affiliated with the former Unification Church, and as I mentioned earlier, I had a negative impression of that church. Accordingly, I was not totally sure it was safe to conduct the interview. Nevertheless, conservative celebrities often appear in this newspaper, and many of them also speak at lectures sponsored by it. I also knew that the quality of the articles themselves was high, and that they had published a number of scoops. Therefore, I thought, “Well, it should be okay,” and contacted them for an interview.

When I actually met the journalist, I found myself in front of an elegant, soft-spoken, knowledgeable reporter, who answered my questions accurately and was very cooperative, which made a very good impression on me.

A little more than a year later, I was reminded of that incident, and wondered whether the former Unification Church, to which such a kind person belonged, was really such an evil organization.

The Truth About the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales and Its Real Aims

After reflecting about the controversies, I decided to first investigate whether the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales is really an organization that is purely concerned with consumer issues, and to trace back the reasons for its

establishment. The July 12 press conference by the Network, as well as the statements by Attorney Masaki Kito, showed that they hold an unusual hatred toward the former Unification Church. I felt there was something beyond mere consumer issues.

What has happened since then is described in the January 2023 issue of *Monthly Hanada*. To put it simply, the Network, established in 1987, has never had as its ultimate purpose to help victims of the so-called "spiritual sales," a word used by the opponents of the Unification Church to designate the sales by some church members of items such as seals, statues, vases, miniature pagodas and others at prices significantly higher than their intrinsic value. The Network was created to prevent the enactment of the Anti-Espionage Law, which was being promoted at the time by the International Federation for Victory over Communism (IFVOC), an affiliate of the former Unification Church. At the time, Attorney Hiroshi Yamaguchi, a key member of the Network, stated at its inauguration that "Money made from spiritual sales is being used to fund the Unification Church and the IFVOC's efforts to enact the Anti-Espionage Law."

In other words, the lawyers in the Network believed that money made from what they called "spiritual sales" was being diverted to fund the enactment of the Anti-Espionage Law. Their purpose was to stop the "spiritual sales" to cut off the flow of money. At a symposium held at the Iwanami Seminar Hall in August 1986, Attorney Takeshi Ono of the Yokohama Bar Association, said that, "Originally, there was only one victim [of the 'spiritual sales'], but we launched a legal defense team and got the media to cover the case, which led to the discovery of other victims." Usually, when the number of victims of a certain practice increases, a relief organization is set up. In this case, the contrary happened: they first set up an organization and then started to look for people who would declare themselves victims.

Incidentally, the former Unification Church has never practiced any "spiritual sales," either now or in the past. It is also not true that money made from "spiritual sales" has been used to fund the activities of the IFVOC. At that time, it was a company owned by Unification Church believers as their private and individual business that had been responsible of the sales the lawyers regarded as objectionable.

Almost all of the lawyers in the Network were affiliated with the former Socialist Party and the Communist Party, who strongly opposed the enactment of the Anti-Espionage Law, were connected with extremist groups and North Korea, and were ideologically leftists and self-styled atheists. In contrast, the former Unification Church is an anti-communist and conservative organization that opposes atheism. It is clear that this was an ideological battle between the two camps. Attorney Hiroshi Yamaguchi also clearly stated, "We want to make a big public announcement [about 'spiritual sales'] because it

will be good for containing right-wing activities, especially for preventing the passing of the Anti-Espionage Law."

The media's extensive coverage certainly helped "discovering the victims" of "spiritual sales." However, Masataka Ito, then chief editor of the *Asahi Shimbun*, who was one of the first journalists to jump on the bandwagon of the "spiritual sales" campaign, revealed his true feelings at a meeting with his colleagues on October 23, 1987. "The newspapers and TV say they are victims, but 90% of the buyers of these goods we talked to said they were happy. Perhaps even 99% of the buyers, (...) but why do you report only about the 1% who are unhappy with the purchases? I have received many protests. They do have a point. In fact, less than 5% of the population claim to be victims of 'spiritual sales.' We took a kind of poll, and the majority of those who bought jars [one of the items sold in the 'spiritual sales'] said they are happy with their purchase."

From these words, coming from people opposed to the Unification Church, I became convinced that the "spiritual sales" campaign was, in the first place, a setup with a specific political agenda.

The Truth About the Abduction and Confinement of More than 4,300 Believers

I was further surprised to learn that among those who claimed to have been "victims" of the "spiritual sales" were deprogrammed former believers who had been abducted and confined by their relatives and forced to leave their faith.

I had heard that former members of the Unification Church were abducted and confined by those who opposed the church, but I was shocked to learn the full picture through the investigation I decided to perform. Until now, more than 4,300 believers have been abducted by physical violence or deception, locked up for long periods of time in apartments or other places, and not released until they abandoned their faith. I interviewed Toru Goto, who was abducted and confined for twelve years and five months but did not give in to attempts to persuade him to leave the Unification Church. It was a horrible ordeal that I could not believe had happened in contemporary Japan. I was even more surprised to hear from Goto that this crime of abduction and confinement has been systematically perpetrated by the anti-Unification-Church camp as a routine deprogramming business.

The deprogrammers and Christian pastors approached parents and persuaded them to organize the abduction and confinement of their adult daughters and sons, telling them that "Your child has joined an evil religion and must be protected and forced to leave it."

Several believers, after long periods of confinement and deprogramming, accepted to leave the church, and were then told they should now sue the religion they used to believe in.

In the 17th century persecution of Christians in Japan, to save their life it was not enough for them to tell the authorities they had abandoned Christianity. They were asked to trample a painting of Jesus underfoot to prove they were no longer Christians. Similarly, now it was not enough for deprogrammed believers to state they were no longer members of the Unification Church. They should prove they had really left the church by claiming they had been "victims of spiritual sales," and filing lawsuits demanding that the church return the money they had paid for the items they had purchased, such as marble vases, two-stories pagodas, seals, and other items.

The Network was thus deeply involved in this abduction and confinement business because they were the attorneys in the subsequent lawsuits filed by former believers against the church. There were lawyers who became rich through these cases, as did deprogrammers and Christian pastors involved in the abductions, who received substantial amounts of money from the relatives of the believers they deprogrammed. When the lawyers were consulted by the believers' parents, they first introduced them to the deprogrammers. If and when deprogramming was successful, the lawyers took over from the deprogrammers as "handlers" of the former believers, made them plaintiffs, and filed lawsuits. The anti-Unification-Church group, including Attorney Kito and journalists Yoshio Arita and Eight Suzuki, still defends deprogramming to this very day, and claims it was performed to "protect" the former members of the Unification Church.

I wrote about the details of the abduction and confinement process in the December 2022 issue of *Monthly Hanada*, but when I asked Attorney Kito for an interview about deprogramming, he was completely unwilling to respond. The Network has often called the former Unification Church an "anti-social organization" and a "cult," but I believe that these labels may be more appropriately used for an organization deeply involved in deprogramming and in illegal practices of abduction and confinement.

The Truth About Sayuri Ogawa

Initially, I did not pay much attention to Sayuri Ogawa (a pseudonym), a second-generation ex-member of the former Unification Church when she first began to appear on TV and other media. When a sensational incident such as the Abe assassination occurs, it is normal that some who believe they have a story to tell would try to attract media attention. The question is, however, whether their testimony is true or not.

Soon, the credibility of her claims began to be questioned, especially on the Internet. Indeed, her explanations about the cause of her mental illness, the reason she left the Unification Church, and the story of her financial troubles with her mother changed from time to time, and her claims were not consistent at all. Then, new stories were suddenly added, such as that she had been sexually harassed by a male group leader during a Unification Church training session, or that while she was at a church event in Cheongpyeong, Korea, her mother had stolen money she had saved and hidden.

The Family Federation is very strict about romantic relationships, and prohibits sexual relationships before marriage. Therefore, it is difficult to imagine a man sexually harassing a woman during a training session, which is a religious event of the church. In my experience of covering similar incidents in other contexts, it is also true that among those who claim to have been sexually harassed, abused by their supervisors, stalked, had their children severely bullied, or suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder, while some were real victims, others made claims that were not true or greatly exaggerated their stories.

If Ogawa had limited herself to present her statements on YouTube or satellite TV, hers might have remained just a minor incident. However, she later testified at hearings by the ruling and opposition parties, attended a press conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan, and was finally invited by the Diet as a witness. She began her speech by raising her voice in front of many Diet members. "(My parents) confiscated my wages, two million yen for five years of a part-time job, which I started when I was in high school. I have never received it back. Despite this situation, my parents repeatedly gave large amounts of donations to the church without asking me and my siblings. The teaching that leads to such donations is forced on children from an early age…"

Many agree that Ogawa was behind both Prime Minister Kishida's decision to exercise the right to ask questions to the Family Federation, a preliminary move towards seeking its dissolution, which he had previously been reluctant to do, and the unusually rapid enactment of the new law for the victims' relief. Needless to say, however, making statements in public involves a significant responsibility. If by any chance a false accusation determined the government to act, it would be a very serious matter.

Around the end of November 2022, I asked a spokesperson for the former Unification Church whether Ogawa's claims were true. He replied, "Her parents are heartbroken. They deny most of Ogawa's claims." Hearing this, I hesitated for a while, and then told the church representative that I would like to interview Ogawa's parents. On December 24, I traveled to Mie Prefecture, where her parents live, to conduct a lengthy interview.

My impression is that both mother and father are loving, ordinary parents who think of their daughter first and foremost. The only thing that distinguishes them from ordinary parents is their faith in the Family Federation. Indeed, since Ogawa was a little girl, they took her to Sunday church services and held a salute ceremony at 5 a.m. once every eight days at their home. But that salute ceremony takes about fifteen minutes. Ogawa claims that she fainted several times during the ceremony and that she dislocated her shoulder when she was made to get down on her knees, but her parents said that this was not true at all. Kneeling on the ground is not specific to this ceremony, but rather a Korean way of bowing to elders (called "respectful worship" in the church). They also told me that she fell asleep in the middle of the ceremony, which they thought was what she described as "fainting."

Ogawa's parents also flatly denied her claim that her family had been poor since she was a child, and that this was due to her parents' large donations to the church. They said that because her father had studied in the U.S. for a long time and his job as a head minister of the Unification Church after returning to Japan paid very little, he could not even afford to tithe, i.e., to pay one tenth of its income to the church, let alone making larger donations.

In the first place, Ogawa was not directly told by her parents that they had made large donations. However, she assumed that her parents had done it because they had in their home items such as marble jars, a two-stories pagoda, and a Maitreya statue. It is true that these items are expensive and in the Unification Church are often given to believers who have made significant donations. However, the jars and the pagoda were from a deceased believer, and her father, who was the local church's head minister, had been asked by the bereaved family to take them. The Maitreya statue was purchased at a low price by a co-religionist friend of her father, who then gave it to him for free.

Ogawa herself stated at a hearing held by the Constitutional Democratic Party last August that, "If (my father's) salary had been better, we might have had a better life. And I had actually heard from my mother that his salary was low." Therefore, she must have been aware that they were poor because her father's income was low.

That all of her siblings were bullied because of the family's poverty was also denied by Ogawa's sister, who was present during the interview. Her two older brothers, who were not present when I met their parents, also clearly denied Ogawa's claims.

Ogawa's claim that her mother stole her part-time job wages has changed several times and is completely inconsistent. For example, regarding the period of time during which her mother took her wage, she said "from the age of 18 to 20 (October 2013–October

2015)" in an email to her father in January 2021; "during high school to after graduation (July 2011–March 2018)" at the Constitutional Democratic Party hearing in August 2022; "for two years after graduating from high school (March 2014–March 2016)" in a conversation on the messaging application LINE with her father also in August 2022; and "from July 2011 to around March 2015" in her written statement to Noriko Ishigaki, a member of the Constitutional Democratic Party, in the case of the Family Federation's request for a preliminary injunction. Ishigaki had posted a video of her party's hearing with Ogawa on her YouTube channel. In response, the Family Federation filed an application with the Tokyo District Court for a provisional injunction ordering the removal of the video, claiming that its content was not based on any fact and constituted defamation of the church.

The reasons why her mother allegedly took her wages also changed from "to pay for the tuition of (Ogawa's) two older brothers," to "because we did not have enough money for living expenses" (although Ogawa said the money was used for donations), to "it is a provisional borrowing and I [the mother] will definitely return the money when you will need it." She also claimed that she reluctantly gave the money to her mother, or alternatively that her mother came to her part-time job premise every month on payday and did not leave until she gave the wage to her.

Indeed, her mother honestly admitted that when Ogawa was a high school student, she had borrowed 160,000 yen from her daughter and did not immediately return it because she was struggling to pay the school fees for her eldest and second sons. However, in May 2018, when Ogawa ran away from home after leaving a letter behind, 220,000 yen were withdrawn from her father's JA bank account via ATM. Ogawa's family keeps all the family members' bank passbooks and bank cards together in a drawer at home, and the PIN numbers are also the same for all family members. Since no one in the family had withdrawn any money that day, "I thought my daughter must have taken it. But we didn't say anything because of the 160,000 yen," her mother stated.

In addition, since Ogawa had repeatedly asked her father to send money after that, he did it several times in response to his daughter's requests, and the total amount came to about 100,000 yen.

Furthermore, Ogawa's brothers also remitted several amounts of money to her because it was true that she had helped them with their school tuition fees. The bank passbooks documenting the withdrawals (supposedly by Ogawa) and remittances by family members were submitted by her parents as evidence in the preliminary injunction case. In other words, even though her mother paid back the 160,000 yen she had borrowed a long

time ago, Ogawa was still claiming, “They took my money for a long time. I want my two million yen back.” The mother completely denies Ogawa’s claims.

Her mother had no idea why her daughter was calling her a thief, and seemed quite shocked. However, out of concern for her mentally unstable daughter, she did not rebuke her with strong words. Instead, her parents patiently tried to communicate with their daughter through LINE, and asked her to send them photos of her bank passbook or other documents as evidence that her mother had taken her money. However, for several times Ogawa either did not reply or deflected the conversation. Therefore, her parents’ efforts to elicit their daughter’s correct memories have not been successful.

However, the written statement Ogawa submitted to the court in the preliminary injunction case reveals her obvious lies. She had stated at the hearing of the Constitutional Democratic Party that, “When I was hospitalized in a psychiatric ward, my mother withdrew all the money from my savings account, which I had hidden and saved, without my permission.” However, the savings account, which she had “hidden and saved” did not actually exist, and the fact that her mother withdrew money from the account without her permission could not be proved. In her written statement, she replaced this version with a completely different story, that her mother borrowed money from her and never returned it.

She also stated at the hearing of the Constitutional Democratic Party that her parents had confiscated all the wages of the part-time job she had started after she graduated from high school, and had used the money for donations to the Unification Church. However, her bank passbook was submitted to the court as evidence. It turned out that her wages from May 2018, when she started receiving her salary by bank transfer instead of hand-delivery, were still in her bank account. This led her to tell yet another completely different story. In the written statement, she claimed that around March 2015, her mother came to the nursing home where she was working on a payday and took almost the entire amount, so she asked the head of the facility to change the way of paying her, from hand-delivery to bank transfer. In fact, since May 2015, her wages for the part-time job were paid by bank transfer. However, both her mother and the head of the nursing home deny Ogawa’s claims.

In other words, the nursing home switched to bank transfer not because of a request by Ogawa, but because of business reasons of their own, and they did it for all their employees. Her mother recorded her conversation with the head of the nursing home and submitted it as evidence in court.

In addition, a written statement filed in the temporary injunction case also revealed that Ogawa had no evidence of her parents' alleged large donations to the Unification Church, on which she had strongly insisted from the beginning of her public appearances. In her written statement, she presented it as a mere speculation, writing that, "The church has a quota for large donations, and it is impossible that my parents, who are devoted followers of the Unification Church, had not made such donations," and "It is my belief that the jars and a pagoda at home were given to my parents as a result of their large donations."

Ogawa has appeared in an NHK (Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai, Japan Broadcasting Corporation) documentary program this year and has published a book, *Sayuri Ogawa: The Second Generation of a Religion* (Shogakukan). Neither in the documentary nor in the book are the alleged large donations mentioned. We may assume that she began to downplay this claim after her parents persuasively denied it. With this, however, the whole idea that she is a victim of the former Unification Church would remain without evidence, and she would have no credibility when calling for the dissolution of the church.

For this reason, Ogawa has decided to focus on a different claim, sexual harassment by a church male group leader. If even this claim would be abandoned, there would be no reason to take her seriously in the media or even to discuss her at all. Unfortunately, however, her story of this incident also has no credibility.

Ogawa reported on social media that she told her mother about the sexual harassment when she came home after the training session, but her mother claims that she had never heard that story. Ogawa also showed an email the male group leader sent to a church staff, but there was no mention of Ogawa claiming she had been sexually abused.

She also sent an e-mail to another staff, saying "I felt the male group leader's eyes on me," but again, nothing was mentioned about sexual harassment. At the time, no one who was involved with her in the training case heard anything about sexual harassment. Perhaps the story was made up after she started talking to the media.

Ogawa has always claimed that she was victimized by the former Unification Church and by her parents, who were church members. Nobody considers the fact, however, that this male group leader is being victimized by being falsely accused by Ogawa. He is not named but can be easily identified by the church members who attended the training session in Chiba at the same time as Ogawa. I consider this to be a serious assault on this man's honor.

Ogawa also stated that her parents gave up two of their daughters for adoption based on the Japanese adoption system, which is true and was also perfectly legal, commenting, "It

is almost like human trading." We believe that this is also defamation against her parents. As I mentioned earlier, I wonder whether she has ever considered how much her heartless words and actions, including calling her mother a thief, hurt her parents' feelings, the honor of her adopted siblings, and by extension, the honor of the Family Federation.

I recently spoke with three female second-generation believers of Ogawa's generation. They never told me anything negative about Ogawa. They are not speaking ill of her because they know that she shares with them the struggles and problems of the second-generation believers, as well as the bond of being brothers and sisters who once shared the same faith. As second-generation believers grow up, the three said, they experience the gap between the values of their faith and those prevailing in the secular world. For example, they realize, and may have problems in accepting it, that the Family Federation's teachings and values about dating and sexuality ask them to behave differently from their friends who are not members of the church.

Ogawa may have experienced such struggles, but she actually fell in love with a non-member of the church and was not prevented by their parents to date and eventually marry him, was able to fully engage in her favorite musical activities with the support of her parents, and easily left the church when she decided to do so. The anti-Unification-Church activists claim that it is not easy to leave the former Unification Church, but Ogawa's own experience tells a different story. You just leave the church. No one will run after you. Ogawa's parents did not force her to remain in the church. These facts too make it very difficult to accept the claim that Ogawa is a victim of the former Unification Church.

If you do not like the organization, you may just stay away from the Family Federation. One wonders why it was necessary for Ogawa to make public statements such as, "The Unification Church is a cult that calls itself a religion and is an antisocial organization that drives its members' families to collapse. We hope that the anti-cult law enacted in France will also be adopted in Japan;" and "Please dissolve this organization." In fact, these statements by Ogawa were just copied and pasted from the claims of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales, and are the proof that she followed their guidance and is under their influence.

After I finished interviewing Ogawa's parents, I was eager to talk to her as well, so I requested an interview through her father and wrote to her e-mail address. However, I received a response from her representative, Attorney Takashi Yamaguchi from the Network. He insisted "We refuse your interview," and even refused to be interviewed himself on her behalf.

I got the impression from Attorney Yamaguchi's reply that the facts are unimportant to the Network. They are willing to say anything, even lies, to destroy the Family Federation. They probably think everything is justified to achieve this aim. That is why they do not care if Ogawa's statements are true or highly dubious or false, and they continue to use her as a convenient tool for their purposes.

Incidentally, this tendency is becoming prominent in several media. The term "post-truth" (which in fact means a non-truth) refers to a situation in which falsehoods that appeal to personal emotions have a stronger influence than objective facts in influencing the public opinion. The "Sayuri Ogawa phenomenon" is a typical case of "post-truth."

A few years ago, the terms "fake news" and "fact-checking" started being currently used. It was necessary to "fact-check" the "fake news" that was rampant in the media. Today, however, any attempt to fact-check Sayuri Ogawa's words and actions is countered by accusations of "slander against a victim," "invasion of privacy," and so on. However, if the media disregard facts, they deny their function and in a way "commit suicide" as media. If the public opinion accepts such media, the society as a whole becomes corrupt. All claim to be interested in social justice, but they will get the contrary of it.

The Lies of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales

There are countless examples of malicious speculation, distortion, and false statements made by Attorney Kito and other lawyers in the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales. Here is one typical example. On September 16, 2022, the Network's Tokyo meeting was held in Ichigaya, where Attorney Hiroshi Watanabe delivered the keynote speech. At that time, he distributed copies of a chart to the participants, which, he said, was an internal document of the Unification Church.

Under the title "Feedback on the implementation of emergency measures for those at high risk," the chart stated, "We will provide feedback on the implementation of 'emergency measures' for believers found to be at high risk from a risk assessment perspective," and included a color-printed chart. The chart listed the numbers of certain persons in each of the 12 districts of Japan, classified as AA or AAA, and the total number of them, which was 911.

Although it was not easy to understand what these numbers meant, Attorney Hiroshi Watanabe proudly explained, "This material is probably from the Unification Church and from 2012. (...) The Unification Church calls donors who donated more than 100 million yen, such as the mother of the suspect assassin of Abe, Yamagami, 'highly dangerous persons,' and says there are totally 911 such persons throughout Japan. AAA probably

are those who donated more than 1 billion yen. They are dangerous if they are not paid attention to, the Unification Church said. They had to take measures."

"Those 911 donors, Watanabe continued, were recruited by believers who concealed their true identity, were lured by hiding the fact that the recruiters represented a religious organization and the Unification Church, and had all their property taken away from them under circumstances where they were threatened and deceived, and their families were destroyed. If these people sued the Unification Church, the church would be in serious trouble, and it had to take preventive measures. I think this material shows the antisocial nature of the Unification Church."

I would like to compliment Attorney Watanabe for his ingenuous explanation, but in fact, this document was not a list of large donors. It was a list of believers who were at high risk of being abducted and confined by deprogrammers. Rather than being rich donors, most of these believers were young church members who had no financial resources. AAA referred to believers who were at extremely high risk of being abducted and deprogrammed, and did not refer to donors who donated more than one billion yen. We do not know whether Attorney Watanabe explained the chart in that way based on a complete misunderstanding, or whether he knew the facts and made up the story. At any rate, we can conclude that this is an incident that shows the "antisocial nature" of the Network and the maliciousness of its use of any material it deems fit for creating propaganda aimed at discrediting the former Unification Church.

Incidentally, the number of abduction and deprogramming cases had started decreasing considerably around 2012, but the danger was still there, to the extent that they needed to have such a chart and consider preventive measures. I hope that the Network, which was deeply involved in the abduction and deprogramming of believers, would understand the true meaning of this chart, and take it seriously.

Court Cases Against the Former Unification Church

In my article "Crimes Committed by 'Deprogrammers' That Are Not Reported by Newspapers and TV (Report on Unification Church, 1)," which appeared in the December 2022 issue of the *Monthly Hanada*, I quoted a statement by Attorney Yoshihiro Ito, a member of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales. He said, "The courts tend to accept easily claims that would never be accepted in other cases if they are directed against cults," and "In civil lawsuits, there is a kind of unwritten rule that if a cult is involved, it will lose the case." These statements were quoted in a written document submitted to the court by Kazuhiro Yonemoto, a reporter, in a lawsuit filed by

Toru Goto, a member of the Family Federation, who was abducted, confined, and submitted to deprogramming attempts for twelve years and five months.

In fact, when we look at the court decisions on cases in which the Family Federation has been sued over the issue of donations, there are several cases in which we must admit that there is indeed some truth in the words of Attorney Ito.

(1) Tokyo District Court Judgment, August 21, 2002

In the case of the Tokyo District Court judgment dated August 21, 2002, the issue was whether a donation of one million yen by Plaintiff "T" to the Family Federation was or not an illegal act. In a six-page written statement submitted to the court, Plaintiff "T" claimed that Family Federation believer "I' had told him that his uncle had served in the Japanese police in Korea during Japan's occupation. "T" stated he was threatened by being told a false story that "Your uncle did horrible things to Korean people. The T family has committed tremendous crimes," and was thus pressured to donate money.

However, other evidence revealed that Plaintiff "T" did not know that his uncle had served in the police in Korea until after he had donated one million yen. In other words, the six-page written statement was a complete fiction, and mentioned facts that were not known to the donor at the time of the donation. Thus, the claim by Plaintiff "T," which was based on this false written statement, had no credibility at all.

The Tokyo District Court, however, surprisingly confirmed that believer "I" had threatened plaintiff "T" by telling him that "The T family has committed tremendous crimes" and that he was "a sinner," and had pressured him to donate money. The court found that there was no evidence of what the "tremendous crimes" "I" mentioned to "T" were: perhaps "I" had not mentioned crimes committed in Korea, but other wrongdoings. Thus, the court found against the Family Federation.

I can only say that the court exhibited a clear prejudice and hostility against the Family Federation, and ruled in favor of Plaintiff "T" even after the credibility of his evidence had collapsed. On the other hand, the testimony of the Family Federation's witnesses who flatly denied that "T" had been told that he should pay for his family's crimes was completely ignored.

It can be said that this was a clearly unjust decision that corresponds to Attorney Ito's "unwritten rule that if a cult is involved, it will lose the case."

(2) Tokyo High Court Judgement, December 26, 2017

The Tokyo High Court judgment dated December 26, 2017, affirmed that, “Soliciting and causing the Plaintiff to make a donation and spend other money was illegal” in a case where 1.5 million yen (p. 25 of the decision) had been donated to the Family Federation. The Plaintiff was moved to donate after listening to an emotional sermon where a Unification Church head minister wept profusely, and the minister himself and others offered donations (p. 42). However, that a church minister weeps when preaching and offering donation does not seem extraordinary in the normal course of religious ceremonies. It is unclear why this should be constructed as an illegal way of soliciting donations.

In this case, one reason that led the court to decide against the Family Federation was the fact that at the time of the Plaintiff’s first contact with the Family Federation, which religious organization was offering courses had not been clearly specified. However, by the end of the course and when the Plaintiff joined the Family Federation and made a donation, clearly what the religious organization was had been clarified. At the time of the donation, the Plaintiff knew that the money will go to the Family Federation. Irrespective of what may have happened at the time of the first contact with the church, which was not the subject matter of the judgement, there seemed to be no reason to conclude that the minister’s emotional sermon was a form of illegal solicitation of donations.

Incidentally, the Plaintiff had left the church as a result of having being kidnapped, confined in an apartment, and deprogrammed. This was a typical case. Several of those who were deprogrammed were subsequently “instructed” to sue the church. We may suspect that, much more than the donation, it was filing a lawsuit that was an act the Plaintiff undertook as a result of an “illegal solicitation.”

(3) Tokyo District Court Judgment, December 3, 2020

In the case of the Tokyo District Court judgment dated December 3, 2020, a female believer of the Family Federation had learned from some co-religionists that they had participated in a ceremony called the Heaven and Earth Blessing, where a widow can have her marriage with her deceased husband blessed. She decided to participate in this ceremony herself. Then, after a dream where she saw her deceased eldest son, she decided to make a significant donation, as she believed in the truth of the church and its doctrines. She then left the church and asked that her donation be returned.

The Plaintiff told the story as I have presented it above in her complaint. The Tokyo District Court, however, found there a case of illegal solicitation of donations, stating that the Plaintiff had donated while being in a situation of constant fear and anxiety induced by the Family Federation believers.

In this case, the Plaintiff knew that the doctrines she was learning were these of the Family Federation. Yet, the solicitation of donations was still deemed illegal, which looks like an indictment of the religion itself. In this sense, the judgment was clearly unfair.

Additionally, in this case the Plaintiff had sought a refund of a portion of her donation while she was still a member of the Family Federation. She had reached a settlement with one of the believers, who refunded her partially, after which she had agreed that she had no other claims.. The validity of the agreement, which the woman had signed freely, was also challenged at trial. The court accepted the Plaintiff's claim that the settlement she has signed was against public order and morals and thus invalid, and declared her entitled to a full refund.

I would like to say that such decision is just a case of religious discrimination. In the case involving the Family Federation, the court stubbornly refused to recognize the validity of a settlement that would have been recognized as valid as a matter of course in any other civil case.

(4) The Abuse of Presumptions

Presumptions should be used with great caution in legal cases. However, presumptions are particularly prominent in judgments where the Family Federation is the defendant. The presumption method is used to infer that, "If the amount of the donations was large, then we can presume that an illegal solicitation of donations was at work." This method has been frequently used since the Fukuoka District Court judgment in 1994, when the Family Federation lost its first donation lawsuit.

However, the large amount of the donations may simply be an indication of the depth of a believer's faith. Presuming that if a donation is large it has by definition been obtained fraudulently corresponds to a primitive logic and to a lack of understanding about how religion works. On the contrary, whether or not there was an illegal act of solicitation is something that should be determined by examining all the circumstances. To presume that the solicitation was illegal based on the amount of money simply imposes a materialistic and quantitative standard to a field such as religion where it should not be applied.

Judging based on presumptions also leads to inconsistencies. The court may find that two similar donations by the same donor to the same church were made one out of free will and the other as a result of an illicit solicitation, just because of their different amounts. In general, all persons have their own consistency and uniformity of behavior. It is strange and unnatural to presume that the process leading the same person to donate twice to the same organization was radically different in the first case and in the second case just because of a difference in the amounts.

At the end of the day, judges are merely speculating. Using presumptions to conclude that all large donations were solicited illegally is just a form of guesswork, ignores the unique circumstances of each case, and is extremely detrimental to the fairness of the trial. There is one extreme example of the abuses caused by the method of presumptions. In the case decided by the Tokyo District Court with a judgement dated January 13, 2008, the Family Federation had been sued by a man whose ex-wife was a believer. The man claimed that the ex-wife had made donations from his bank account without his permission during their marriage.

Although the ex-wife denied that she had donated any money to the Family Federation, the court judged that all the unaccounted money from her ex-husband's bank passbook had been donated to the Family Federation. The court also stated that the Family Federation knew that the donations were from the husband's property and had been made by the ex-wife without his authorization.

In this case, the judge failed to identify the person in the Family Federation who had received the donations, yet held the Federation responsible. This was a wild decision, putting the judge in the position of an omniscient God and denying the Family Federation a fair trial.

In 2021, the Family Federation won two cases in the Tokyo District Court. In both cases, the Plaintiffs were represented by leading lawyers from the Network. However, the Plaintiffs' claims and evidence were so egregiously false that the court had no choice but to declare a total defeat for the Plaintiffs.

In the Tokyo District Court judgment of March 1, 2021, the court even pointed out the possibility that the evidence submitted by the Plaintiff was fabricated. In the case of the Tokyo District Court judgment dated May 14, 2021, there was a significant discrepancy between what the Plaintiff said and the documents the same Plaintiff had submitted.

However, despite extreme cases like this, in general the courts continue to apply "the unwritten rule that if a cult is involved, it will lose the case," and the conclusion of the

cases can be easily predicted at their beginning. To reach these conclusions, courts would accept the statements of the Plaintiffs even when they are hardly believable, would ignore witnesses from the Family Federation who contradict the Plaintiff's statements, and would abuse the methods of presumptions to create "facts" that would lead to the defeat of the Family Federation in the case.

It is clear that no matter how many such unreasonable decisions are accumulated, they cannot be used as grounds for the dissolution of the Family Federation.

The Family Federation Members

Since I began my investigation of the former Unification Church, now the Family Federation for World Peace and Unification, I have come into contact with and discussed with a wide variety of members, including church staff, ordinary believers, second-generation believers, and members who had been abducted and confined for the purpose of deprogramming. They are all gentle, kind, and thoughtful people. In a word, they are good people. And, in keeping with the doctrine of "love both your benefactors and enemies," they are very tolerant of those who slander and attack them. To be honest, I think they are even too nice.

Why, then, do people have a bad image of the former Unification Church? It is probably because the anti-Unification-Church lobby has conducted an intense negative campaign against the church for many years, and as a result, a social stigma is now strongly rooted in Japanese society, as is a broader prejudice against new religions.

Final Statement

Through my articles in *Monthly Hanada* since last year, I have revealed many facts that had remained hidden and had been not generally reported, such as the true identity of the National Network of Lawyers Against Spiritual Sales and of Sayuri Ogawa. Through my investigation, what was most surprising, however, was that even the courts have been extremely influenced by the media to the point of issuing decisions I regard as unjust. Some media poke fun at the Kishida government as one unduly influenced by TV talk shows, but unfortunately the judges themselves appeared to be influenced by the media. I would like to write about this issue in a future article.

Increasingly, I meet politically conservative reporters and activists who have understood the political agenda behind the campaigns against the former Unification Church.

I sincerely hope that your Ministry will come to a fair and neutral judgment on the issue, based on true facts, without being unnecessarily influenced by left-wing political parties, left-wing lawyers, and left-leaning biased media.